



Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

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Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Testimony **in Support of Assembly Bill 703**

Good morning Chairman Gunderson and Members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today on behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation in support of Assembly Bill 703 calling for the membership of agricultural and hunting, fishing and trapping representatives on the Natural Resources Board. The Federation is comprised of 158 hunting, fishing and trapping organizations. The combined membership of those organizations is in excess of 100,000 members.

We support Assembly Bill 703 because it ensures that individuals with knowledge and a background in agriculture and hunting, fishing and trapping will be directly involved in determining the policies that are critical to the future of those pursuits.

Please let me share the perspective from my direct involvement with the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources.

During my whole thirty-two year tenure at DNR, an individual with close ties to the agricultural community served on the NRB. My first reaction to that as an employee was to question why one group should have that distinction. I learned through experience that it was very valuable to have someone with agricultural expertise right at the table as the Board made their decisions. Their input was critical to the vast array of issues coming before the Board affecting agriculture, including deer management, nonpoint pollution regulations, rural land purchases, forestry management, wetland regulations and many other critical programs. To put this in perspective, in the southern two-thirds of the state, the great majority of fish and wildlife habitat exists on private agricultural lands. Without the cooperation of farmers, it is not possible to effectively manage fish and wildlife habitat in Wisconsin. Having a Board member with agricultural experience at the table when important policy decisions are made is critical to assure the policies are grounded in the real world of agriculture

and helps ensure the buy-in of the agricultural community in the final decisions.

The Federation also supports the provision in AB 703 that requires individuals with hunting, fishing and trapping experience be on the Natural Resources Board. Once again, please allow me to share my personal experience. During my eight years as DNR Secretary, I served in major roles in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and eventually served as its Vice-President. From that perspective I had the opportunity to see what happened in fish and wildlife agencies in other states. Many of those agencies were also governed by citizen boards very similar to the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board. As states have become more urbanized, there has been a trend for those boards to have more non-hunting, fishing and trapping representatives appointed to their membership. As a result some such boards have actually adopted anti-hunting, fishing and trapping policies. This was especially true in the State of Colorado where for several years the Colorado Division of Wildlife actually had a citizen board that had an anti-hunting bias. I can recall listening to the absolute frustration of the wildlife professionals in the Colorado Division of Wildlife discuss the wildlife management problems that were being caused by the appointment of a majority of individuals to their commission that had an anti-hunting bias.

It is critically important to the future of hunting, fishing and trapping in Wisconsin to have Natural Resource Board members with the knowledge, background and interest in the pursuit of those activities. The Wildlife Federation respectfully requests that you support Assembly Bill 703.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today on this important bill.

Submitted by:

George Meyer
Executive Director

January 30, 2008

January 30, 2008

Inn of the Park, Capitol Square

5 to 8 P.M.

Conservation Lobby Day Reception & Wild Game Feed

Join sportsmen and women, conservationists, and environmentalists for a Wild Game Feed following Conservation Lobby Day. Wild game, fish, pasta, vegetables and dessert are all on the menu for this exciting meal!

\$8 per person, Cash Bar

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**For Questions, call Wisconsin League
of Conservation Voters at 661-0845**